MINING GLOSSARY

AFTERDAMP - carbonic acid gas resulting from the combustion of firedamp in coal mines. (N)

BACK SHIFT - repairing shift (afternoon or night). (N)

BANKSMAN - man working on conveyor belts at the pit top in earlier times. He sorted coal out into grades. (N)

BANNOCKING - similar to HOLING except that BANNOCKING takes place at the top of the seam whereas HOLING takes place at the bottom. Bannocking is the cutting out of the soft material above some types of coal seam to prevent it falling down and mixing with the coal when the coal is removed. The material itself is referred to as BANNOCKING, for which Nelson gives BANNOCK or BANNOCKING DIRT. See HOLING.

BANTLE or BANT - the number of men in a case, or a cage-load of men. At Underwood the maximum was usually twelve but the cages in some Yorkshire pits can carry up to thirty-six. BANTLE is possibly connected with BANYEL (Scotland and Northumberland), bundle, package, or crowd of people. (EDD)

BATS - carbonaceous shale, inferior coal and stones. (N)

BAT LAD - boy employed in former times to pick bats out of coal. The bats would then be discarded. See BAT, BELT LAD.

BELT LAD - boy employed in former times to clean coal. Tubs were tipped on to the conveyor belt and as coal came along the boys picked out the bats.

BENK - coal face; probably related to BENCH, an open-cast mining term meaning horizontal step or floor along which coal is worked. (Nelson) OED gives BENK as obsolete Northern form of BENCH.

BIND - soft stone found in the pit. (N)

BLACKDAMP - a suffocating mixture of carbon dioxide and nitrogen, poisonous if carbon monoxide is present. It is heavier than air and is sometimes found in the GOBBINGS. (N)

BOBBIN OF POWDER - unit of explosive which the shotfirer places in the bore.

BOG AND WINK - the name of a particular pit in Selston.

BORE - hole in which explosive charge is placed. (N)

BORER - machine for boring shot holes. It is powered electrically and has a coal bit and rock bit for drilling the different materials.

BRANCH GATES - tributary gates to the main gate, sometimes serving as supply gates. See GATE.

BRASSY COAL - useless coal of a brassy colour, containing iron pyrites. BRASS is the term used in South Wales according to Nelson.

BRATTICE CLOTH(ING) ['brɛtɪs klɔθ] ['brɛtɪs 'klɔθɪn] - hessian impregnated with tar put up in the gate to create a stronger flow of air. It speeds up the air-flow by limiting the space through which the air can pass, and helps to disperse gas quickly. (N)

BREAKING UP - dismantling, performed by erectors; for instance, the dismantling of pans on a conveyor prior to its advancement. First, the belt is slackened by pulling out the rod from the joints. The belt is then rolled up to the side of the coal face and reassembled. This takes place during the afternoon shift.

BUTTOCK END - a loose end of the coal in the stable hole. Nelson gives BUTTOCK.

BUTTON MEN - a job usually performed by older men. Colliers on a BUTTON JOB may tend to feel inferior, because they may be considered unsuitable for strenuous work. It involves operating a moving belt. The button man operates the control panel, signalling with bells, e.g. one signal would stop the belt, two would "hutch" it, or move it slightly, and three would start it.

BUTTONING PLACE - any place where the colliers rest, or take a BUTTON, on their walk through the pit. BUTTON meaning REST is, according to EDD, found in Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire.

BUTTY - stall man, or contractor in charge of a stall, who paid the men working under him. (N)

CAGE - mechanical lift in the mine, sometimes referred to as CHAIR. (N)

CALLED O'ER T'COALS - a common expression outside the pit, but appropriately applied by miners to the idea of being summoned to the GAFFER's office, for instance, for having too many BATS in one's TUB.

CAP LAMP - spotlight fastened on to the miner's cap. (N)

CHAIR [tʃɪə] - cage, carrying a BANTLE of miners. According to EDD, it is found in Derbyshire.

CHECKWEIGHMAN - man employed by the union to check the weighmen. According to Nelson, with modern all-conveyor mining, the term is obsolescent. (N)

CHEEKING ['tʃɛɪkɪn] - removing the bulging sides of a GATE or road which had been pushed in by the weight of the roof. If tubs rubbed on the walls cheeking was necessary. See DINTING, RIP and ROOVING.

CLANNY - miner's safety lamp, a flame lamp used when testing for gas. See GRANNY. According to EDD, the word is used in Northumberland and Durham and refers to the lamp invented by Dr. Clanny in 1813. (N)

CLIP - device used for fixing, or CLIPPING ON, tubs to an endless rope. There are two types: the collar clip, and the sma'man (small man?), the latter resembling a pheasant with a hook at one end and a handle at the other. The hook would be put into the TUGHOLE in the tram or tub. The rope would be put into a groove [grɔuv] in the clip and the handle would be pressed down to complete the clipping on. The TUGHOLE was used in GANGING days (see GANG) for putting one end of a shaft iron in while the other end went through the horse's shaft.

CLIPPER ON - man who connected, or CLIPPED ON tubs to the endless rope. Cf. CLIPPER in Nelson.

CLUNCH - a soft BIND or clay, found usually under the hard coal seam. This material was sent to Pye Hill Pipeyard or to Langley Mill pottery to be made into pots. (N)

CODGER - box to protect the sprocket which turns the chain or belt (see PANZER CHAIN).

COFFEE POT - an old colliery locomotive which used to pull wagons up Bentley's Hill.

CORPORAL - man in charge of several gangers, whose work he would supervise and check. He was a minor official in the pit, responsible to the deputy. (N)

CRAMP - a device for straightening bent rails, or for bending straight rails. The rail was fitted into the cramp between two small clamps (referred to by the informant as ['nɛ̈:dʒəz]). The device was about two feet long and was tightened up to bend the rail by means of a handle and large screw. The cramp would be moved along a foot or two and the operation would be repeated until the required bend or straightness was achieved.

CUTTER PICK - replaceable biting edge of the coal cutting machine. Picks are fixed on to a cutting chain which is called a JIB. Cf. COAL-CUTTER PICKS in Nelson.

DATALLER, DAYTALER ['deɪtlə] - man who works on the 'clearing up' shift, often at night, doing odd jobs such as sweeping up, packing dirt, taking out broken bars and old timber and putting in new, and generally making things safe. Datalling is not heavy work, and is often done by experienced older men, past their best. Cf. OED - a day labourer, a workman engaged and paid by the day.

DEPUTY - underground official in charge of work in his district. He is appointed by the colliery manager and is responsible for the safety of men and operations. Cf. Nelson: in Northumberland and Durham a man who sets timbers and props is sometimes called a DEPUTY. (N)

DINTING - levelling a floor which is HOOVED [ɪuvd] up by pressure caused by the weight of the packs either side of the road. See CHEEKING, ROOVING, PACKERS, RIP.

DIP - (n) a downward slope in the gate, the opposite of RISE.

DIRT - any useless material, rock etc. found among coal. (N)

DISTRICT - area including a coal face supervised by a deputy. Districts are referred to by plural numbers, e.g. 'threes', 'twenties'. (N)

DOG - (n) a coupling between tubs. There were two types of dog: the STIFF DOG, and the CHAIN DOG, which was considered better. The chain dog had two hooks and a slack chain which would be lapped over if the tubs ran bumper to bumper.

DOG ON - (v) couple up tubs or wagons.

DOGGER ON - (n) boy or man who coupled up tubs. This job, at the pit bottom, was usually a boy's first job at the pit. Then he might become a RUN AFORE LAD.

DOLLY PROP - a stationary, hand operated prop.

DOWNCAST SHAFT - air shaft along which fresh air was pumped into the mine (see UPCAST SHAFT). (N)

DOWTY PROP - this superseded the use of timber for propping, and has itself been superseded by the Roofmaster. It could be lowered gradually with a special spanner, but often caused difficulty when DRAWING OFF because it sank perhaps two feet into the floor with the weight of the roof. It had to be pulled out and could not be chipped with a HATCHET BLADE as could the older timber props. (N)

DRAWING OFF - said to be the worst paid job in the pit. DRAWING OFF was drawing out timbers and props etc. from the worked out parts of the pit, for instance the back gobs. It was a dangerous job, done on night shifts together with the CUTTING to make the face ready for the next day. Colliers would be fined for leaving timber in. The process is now obsolete, having been superseded by caving (encouraging the roof to collapse freely to fill the waste area). Cf. Nelson DRAWING TIMBER.

DRIFT - (n) steep incline on a roadway.

DROP CHAIR ['drɔpt∫ɪə] - hand operated device for lowering or raising tubs to different DECKS or levels, usually six or eight feet.

DUDDLY - a water bottle for drinking, holding three or four pints. The only etymological clue in OED is DUDDLE, an obsolete and rare term for teat or nipple: "1708 T. Ward. Eng. Ref. (1716) 242 'To his lips Madge held the Bottle, On which he suckt, as Child at Duddle'."

DEBTOR - see the preamble for conveyor after the day shift, operation is [done to forward] and preamble is for the next day's coal cutting. See BRAKE UP.

FACE - the solid coal station at the end of a working place in a mine. (E)

FACE FITTER - man responsible for overhauling machines at coal face.

FAULT - a break in a seam of coal where the seam finds two levels. There could be ninety yards between the broken ends of the seam. Following a seam upwards at a fault is a dangerous job, with risks from falling coal. After a break in the seam, the direction of the rest of the seam is referred to, if above, as an UPTHROW, or, if below, as a DOWN THROW. (E) See WORKIN FAULT and LAUTHERED.

FILLER - see LOADER, which has the same meaning. (E)

FIREDAMP - poisonous, explosive gas, predominantly methane. (E)

FOOT HILL - a small mine drifted from the surface to reach shallow seams. They were owned privately, being operated by perhaps a couple of families. There was one at Smalley before the war. (K) OED records that the word is of unknown etymology, but quotes a reference which offers a clue to its etymology, or at least to the related word FOOT RIDD: "1565 FOOT Staffordsh. iii 129. "The open works ... where ... the Workmen rid off the earth, and dig the coal under their feet ... there being no need for these, of windlass, roap, or cart, whence these sort of Coale-works are commonly call'd Foot-ridde or Footrilla'."

FOUR A MAN PAID - a phrase meaning: if a man loaded four tubs he was paid a day's wage. Each tub was of half a ton capacity. A good stall could load five a man. When machines came colliers had to load eight a man to make it pay, or as the informant pronounced it: [ait ə man tə mɛi it? pi:]. [it tuk sʌm 'dʌmn] 'It took some doing'.

GADGET - possibly a corruption of HATCHET; a tool with a pick at one end of the head and a horizontal blade at the other (see HATCHET BLADE). The term is not found in OED, but under GADGE, an obscure instrument of torture

referred to by Browning, the following quotation occurs: "1845. Browning. Soul's Trag. 1.332 'The dead back-weight of the beheading axe! The glowing trip-hook, thumbscrews and the gadge !'."

GANG - (v) look after ponies in the pit; 'ship tubs' to the TURNOUT. (obsolescent)

GANGER or GANGLAD - miner, often a boy, in charge of ponies. A boy might become a ganger after being a RUN-AFORE-LAD. After working as a ganger, he might be employed on TOPPING UP tubs in the gate and loading larger tubs from JOTS. He would then become a loader. A gang lad was not allowed in the BENK, but might go in if the deputy was not about, perhaps to THROW T'DOT (dirt) into the gobbings for one of the colliers.

GANGWAY - railway in the pit. (N)

GATE - road in the pit, either broad or narrow. Cf. Nelson, MAIN GATE.

GEEZ [dʒi:z] - an inferior type of coal running on the good seam. It is a shiny, crackly coal, not good enough to be sold generally, but it has been occasionally sold cheaply.

GIN PIT - very old disused collieries. A gin was a hand hoist for mining (cognate with ENGINE). (N)

GOBS, GOBBING(S) - holes where coal has been taken, filled with waste DIRT. Hence the saying "gobbed up", said of holes, not necessarily in the mine, when filled. OED suggests GOB is perhaps an alteration of GOAF influenced by GOB meaning 'mass' or 'lump'. According to Nelson, GOAF probably derives from Welsh OGOF - a cave.

GOB FIRE ['gɔb fɒɪə] - spontaneous combustion in the gobbing when wood etc. catches fire and smoulders. This was more frequent in the earlier days of mining. (N)

GODKIN FAULT - a large fault in a local coal seam.

GORM [gɑ:m] - another name for GOB, possibly connected with gormr (ooze, mud) found in Icelandic. EDD records use of the word in many counties as a verb meaning to clog or choke with grease or dirt.

GRANNY - miner's safety lamp; possibly a corruption of CLANNY.

GULLICKS - metal, power operated hydraulic supports or props held firmly in place by GULLICK CHOCKS.

GUMMINGS - small coal or dirt left after HOLING. A GUMMER would go GUMMING, i.e. clearing this material out. (N)

HAND-GOT - TH' 'AND-GOT DAYS [ðan^{d}gɒʔ di:z] - the old days when coal was GOT or cut by hand, before the machine aids [mə'ʃɛɪn i:dz]. HAND-MINING (Nelson) is a widespread equivalent in other areas.

HATCHET BLADE - tool with a handle, the head consisting of a hatchet blade at one end and a pick point at the other. It was sometimes used for cutting timber if drawing off was difficult.

HEAD - RAM'S HEAD, BULL HEAD - different bits for the electric boring machine.

HOLER - man who did the HOLING, before machines were used in the mines. Holing was cutting coal manually from the bottom of the coal face. Colliers, lying on their backs, used to hole stints about four feet UNDER, i.e. about four feet into the coal.

JACK PROPS - props which can be made longer or shorter mechanically.

JERRY(PIT) - name of a pit near Bentinck colliery.

JIB - cutting chain into which are fixed picks - see CUTTER PICK. (N)

JIBBER - in the earlier days of MACHINE-GETTING, the jibber used to go behind clearing up after the machine as machine-getting was messier than when coal was HAND-GOT. This was a hard job. The informant commented: [ɛɪ ad nɔu 'aldɪ] 'he had no holiday', i.e. he worked hard. A later equivalent was the LONG SHOVEL MAN.

JIG - an obsolete device by which empty tubs were pulled up a slope on rails by the weight of full ones going down. The device was controlled by a JIG WHEEL with a brake. Cf. Nelson - JIG BACK.

JOT, JOTTY - a small TUB or TRAM with no sides. It was pulled along on rails by ponies. See TRAM. OED does not record the term but contains a possible clue to its etymology in JOT (v) - to jog, jolt, bump, although the connection of ideas is tenuous.

LAMP CABIN - place where lamps are charged. Colliers pick the lamps up at the beginning of a shift from the lamp cabin and replace them on their stands there at the end. Cf. Nelson LAMP STATION.

LAUNDER - a trough for conveying water from a higher to a lower level. The term is also used in the area, and in Derbyshire for the spouting or drainpipe on a house. (N)

LEATHERBED - a small soft piece of dirt or clay found at a fault, indicating whether the fault is on an up or down throw (i.e. whether the seam carries on above or below). (N)

LIDS - pieces of wood placed between a prop and a bar, only used with stationary props. (N)

LOADER - after a boy was employed on TOPPING UP tubs, he would be employed as a loader, loading tubs on the benk. After this job he would move on to GETTING coal and setting his timber. (N)

LOADER HEAD - point at which coal leaves the conveyor and is loaded into mine cars. Cf. Nelson LOADING POINT.

LOMMY - a soft stone, difficult to support when it forms a roof, or a LOMMY TOP. Cf. Nelson - a soft holing clay (Yorkshire). The term does not occur in OED, but is possibly derived from LOAM - clay, clayey earth, mud.

LONG SHOVEL MAN - a man who cleaned out dirt left by the machine after the machine had moved on. He had to keep up with the machine. See JIBBER.

LOOSE ALL - signal whistle to finish work. The term suggests the idea of setting everyone LOOSE or free from work.

MAIN-AND-TAIL (ROPES) - rope tied to the front and back of a line of tubs. The tubs can be winched backwards or forwards by means of two drums worked by one engine. When one drum winds, the other runs free. (N)

MANHOLE - refuge cut into the side of a road offering protection for miners during the passage of a train of tubs or a ganger. (N)

MAN RIDER ['man 'raɪdə] ['mɔn 'rʊɪdə] - transport to carry colliers from the pit bottom to the FACE. Cars are pulled by means of a haulage rope. There are some modern versions of this with chairs. (N)

MOLESKINS - moleskin trousers were worn by colliers in the old days of mining.

MONORAIL ['mɔnəreɪl] - a modern system for conveying supplies. Carriages are suspended from and run along a single continuous overhead rail. The system can be worked by an endless rope. (N)

MOTHER GATE ['mɔðə geɪt] - the main GATE or road which is usually central in the pit. At each end is a SUPPLY GATE. The coal is brought along the mother gate from the coal face. (N)

MOTTY - a check number. It was usually a medallion collected with the lamps at the beginning of a shift. The collier would put the motty on his tub to identify it. Sometimes a number was chalked or whitewashed on to the tub instead. OED: "Pegge (Suppl. to Grose (1814) 389 'motty' - the mark at which the quoits (or coits) are thrown (Derb)." The idea of a mark is common to both words and suggests that they are connected.

MOTTY PLACE - place where the motties were kept and distributed.

MUSCAMP CHOCKS - hydraulic chocks supporting props and holding up to fifty tons. They are similar to gullick chocks but made by a different firm, hence the name.

ONSETTER - man in control of the pit top. He controls the signals and works the cage. Another onsetter works at the pit bottom, controlling the placing of tubs into the cage at the bottom of the shaft. Miners give their CLOCK CARDS to the onsetter before going down the pit. (N)

OSTLER - man in charge of the stables.

PACKERS - men who built packs to support the roof of a waste area. The packs were made from dirt out of the rippings. The practice has been mainly superseded by caving. (N)

PADDY - railway pulled by a winch, conveying colliers to the coal face from the pit bottom.

PADDYMAN - man in charge of the PADDY.

PANZER CHAIN - heavy duty conveyor to carry the coal cut and loaded on to it by the trepanner. Cf. Nelson - PANZER CONVEYOR. More widespread terms (Nelson) are ARMOURED FLEXIBLE CONVEYOR and SNAKING CONVEYOR. See SNAKER.

PICKINGS - coal reserved as COLLIERS' COAL for the colliers themselves.

PILLOW - a local variant pronunciation of PILLAR. A PILLAR, a widespread term in mining (see Nelson) is a support of solid coal left before a BENK is opened. They are left about every 500 yards.

PIT BOTTOM - area at the bottom of the shaft from the PIT HEAD. The ROADS lead out from the pit bottom and men go to the face from here. (N)

POTHOLES - large and very dangerous plugs of rock or shale in the roof. They are apt to fall out of the roof without warning, often being circular in shape and as smooth as glass. A POTHOLE, defined in OED as "a deep hole of more or less cylindrical shape" is, in Selston mining terminology, not a hole but the actual rock which falls. An informant described them as being as smooth as glass, "like a great big pancheon - there's been many a man killed wi' a pothole". Cf. Nelson - POTS.

PUFFLER - another name for CORPORAL, i.e. a man in charge of several gangers. It relates often to a man on the coal face who checks to see how other men were working and gives them jobs to do [ɛɪd 'apm gɛtʔ θrɛɪ bɔb ə dɛɪ mɔ: ðən jou] 'he'd perhaps get three bob a day more than you'.

PULLER OFF - man who raised the empty tubs from the pit bottom to another level, usually by hand in a drop chair (see RUNNER ON).

RAMMING - another name for STEMMING or PACKING SHOTS (explosive charges). Cf. Nelson - RAMMER.

RAT TRAP - nickname for CHOCK RELEASE. A device for supporting gobbings in place of props. Wooden chocks perhaps 2' long and 4" deep, were piled up to the roof. In DRAWING OFF a little lever ['lɛɪvə] or [nɛ̈:dʒ][1] on the chock release was tapped up with a hammer and the chocks would collapse. This was supposed to be a safe method but the RAT TRAPS used to get buried and could be dangerous. They were superseded by ROOFMASTERS and STEEL BASED CHOCKS. Even these could be buried and cause great trouble in getting them out, sometimes taking two men a whole night to remove.

RING - an iron hoop supporting the gate; "like an iron bowler ['baulə]".

RINGER - crowbar for getting coal by prising lumps. OED quotes: "1858 SIMMONDS Dict. Trade, Ringer, a miner's name for a crowbar. 1879 Cheshire Sheaf 1.322. (EDD), Ringer, an iron or steel lever, usually about four feet long".

RINGER AND CHAIN - an old-fashioned method of DRAWING OFF (see RINGER). The chain had a hook on it and would be wrapped around the prop to be pulled out. At the end of the ringer was a spike. The chain was connected to a hook on the ringer and the ringer was pulled. The SYLVESTER, which was introduced later, allowed a greater length of chain and more safety because the operator could go further back. [ɪt̰ʔ wɪ ə bɪun tət̰ʔ 'mɒɪnəz] 'It was a boon to the miners'. OED quotes: "1883 GRESLEY Gloss. Coal-mining, Ringer and Chain (M.), see "Dog and Chain" [an iron lever with a chain attached by which props are withdrawn from the goaf]."

RIP - to tear down the roof, perhaps in preparation for the face, or if it sagged too low and caused a pony to ROOVE, or rub against the roof (see RIPPER).

RIPPER - man who removes layers of rock above the coal seam. He constructs the GATES advancing the coal face and blowing out DIRT to clear the way for the colliers. (N)

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1. This word was used by one informant in particular and is difficult to identify. See CRAMP for another instance of its use by the same informant.

RIPPING - (n) the dirt which the ripper blows or cuts out. In Nelson, the term refers to the act of breaking down the roof; not the material cut out.

RISE - a rising slope in the gate, the opposite of DIP. (N)

ROOFMASTER - modern metal hydraulic support, made by Dowty, which superseded the Dowty prop. It can be pushed forward without knocking it out. (N)

ROOVING ['rɪuvɪn] - if a pony's collar caught against the roof, perhaps making its neck sore, the pony was said to be ROOVING. A broken bar might have caused the roof to lower, making RIPPING necessary. See DINTING, RIP, CHEEKING. OED: "1883 GRESLEY Gloss, Coal mining 206 Roove, to rub or knock against the roof".

RUN-AFORE-LAD - a boy would become a run-afore-lad after the initial job of DOGGER ON. He would go along the GATE before the ganger who led the pony and clear obstacles, prop open doors, etc. and learn the job that the ganger was doing. After a few days he might take over the pony and the ganger would graduate on to the coal face.

RUNNER ON - man who ran full tubs on to a CHAIR and lowered them on to the pit bottom (main level), usually by hand in a drop chair (see PULLER OFF).

SCRAPER - long thin copper device for scraping out shot holes before putting in the shot (explosive charge). Iron and steel scrapers are not permitted in the mine. (N)

SCREEN [skrɛɪn] - device working like a riddle to separate sizes of coal, and the good coal from bad coal or dust. Coal goes from the screens to the washer. The old type of screen was like a large fork. Checks were made on miners to ensure that coal was not shovelled into the tubs without being screened. If the deputy came along the stalls, men wishing not to be caught shovelling would throw a piece of coal along into the next stall as a warning, and all along the stalls men would resume screening until the deputy had gone (see SLECK BOBBY). (N)

SELF RESCUER - modern gas mask.

SELSTON BRIGHTS - very good quality coal, from Underwood pit. A lump would burn all night without leaving as much as a saucer full of ash.

SHAKER - mechanism which shakes the conveyor belt to move coal along a downhill or uphill gradient.

SHAKKING ['ʃakɪn] - dodging work. The term most likely originates from the same word as SHAKING since both are pronounced ['ʃakɪn] in Selston. This meaning is not found in OED, but an interesting equivalent is found in the Barnsley area of South Yorkshire in WAGGING IT, used particularly by children for 'playing truant'. "Shaking" and "wagging" often have similar meanings in other contexts.

SHEARER - power loading machine which cuts coal and loads it on to the PANZER CHAIN, a heavy duty conveyor. It is similar to a TREPANNER.

SHIFT - (1) the period of daily work done by miners. There are three shifts: the "day" shift (morning) for turning coal and loading, the afternoon shift for breaking up and erecting machinery, and the night shift for daytaling, drawing off, and cutting the face in preparation for the next day.

(2) all the men working on a particular shift, e.g. the DAY SHIFT. (N)

SHONKIE - the name of a local pit.

SHOTFIRER - man who fires or blows dirt or coal out of stable holes or rippings with explosives. In the old days this was done by the deputy.

SHOT HOLE - a hole bored in coal or rock to accommodate an explosive charge for breaking up the material. (N)

SHOT WIRE - known widely as SHOTFIRING CABLE (Nelson) - wire used officially to detonate explosions during shot firing, but used unofficially by colliers for such purposes as mending torn clothes. In Barnsley it is known as colliers' cotton.

SINGLET - vest worn by colliers at work. PIT SINGLET is a very common term, although SINGLET is used widely outside mining.

SKIP - rectangular steel container with a capacity from four to ten tons. (N)

SKIP WINDING - the act of tippling coal into a SKIP or HOPPER. Mine cars tip their loads into the skip. This is a modern process, not in use at Pye Hill and not seen by the informant.

SLECK - local pronunciation of SLACK (Nelson): small coal with a high ash content.

SLECK BOBBY - man at the pit top who reported to the GAFFER if too much slack appeared in the coal as the tubs were turned over. If so, a man might be accused of shovelling instead of SCREENING coal into the tub. The former was easier and forbidden, and colliers guilty of shovelling were fined 2/6d, 5/-, 7/6d or 10/- depending on whether this was the first offence or not. Modern methods have rendered the sleck bobby obsolete. BOBBY is a common word in Selston and the surrounding area for policeman, as it is in many other areas.

SLIDE - rail which swings round to divert tubs (equivalent to Barnsley SWING TOMMY. A KICK SLIDE is a short version of this.

SNAKER - name for machine and man who operates it. As coal is taken from the coal face the pans on the conveyor are pushed by the snaker up to the face. SNAKING (pushing the conveyor forward) is a widely used term in other areas.

SNAP - food; a collier's lunch. In OED a dialectal word for a slight or hasty meal or mouthful; a snack. OED quotes: "1883 GRESLEY Gloss. Coal - m. 229 Snap, ... food taken by a collier during his shift".

SNAP TIN - miner's food tin. When miners have a lunch break they are said to STAND SNAP.

SOUGH - covered drain. According to OED, a "subterranean drain to carry off the water in a mine". Examples dating back to the 17th century are quoted with reference to gold, lead and coal mining.

SPEARMINT - in many cases this superseded tobacco for chewing as a means of keeping the mouth moist.

SPRAG - n. a short prop used in HOLING to support rock or coal. (N)

SPRAG (UP) - v. 1. during HOLING, coal was spragged up or supported with sprags.

2. tubs could be SPRAGGED, i.e. anchored, on a slope to prevent them rolling away, by means of timber or rods inserted between the wheel spokes.

STABLE HOLES - recesses or spaces excavated at each end of the coal face so that the cutting machine can be turned, and can cut another layer the same depth as the stable hole. (N)

STALL - section of the coal face where two, three or four men worked, one of whom was the BUTTY, in charge. The system is obsolete and was disused when pits became mechanized. Coal was bored with a hand drill, or pick, loaded into TUBS and these were pushed out into the GATE where a GANGER would come for them with a pony. The butty contracted for the work in his stall and paid the men under him. (N)

STEMMING - pushing and tamping a plugging material into a shot-hole before the charge is put in (ramming). The hole is made airtight by plugging it with a substance such as soft clay. (N)

STINT - a section of work, measured in terms of the amount of coal to cut away during a shift. When the stall system became obsolete, twenty or more men would be contracted for a stint. The stint would be perhaps eight or ten yards per man. (N)

STOPPING - CLOTHING ['klɔθɪn] or a permanent brick partition put in a doorway, often to block an old, dangerous airway. (N)

STOWER - man in the older days of mining who filled a truck (perhaps twelve ton) with coal from the belt. Coal was passed by the BANKSMAN from the belt. Every lump had to be placed in the truck, not thrown, if it was best quality coal. Both OED and EDD give a different meaning in connection with mining, as a miner whose job is to pack up stone. The word is also used for a stevedore, or ship loader.

SUPPLY GATE - road for transporting materials and equipment in the pit.

SWARF, SWARFIN ['swɑ:fɪn] - n. + v. a tub of SWARF [swɑ:f] or DUBBIN, a type of grease, was kept to be put on the axles of tubs or trams for lubrication. EDD defines SWARF as "grease mixed with grit which exudes from the axle of a wheel or from a grindstone", implying that the grease is used and contaminated rather than fresh grease about to be used, as in the Selston application of the term.

SYLVESTER AND CHAIN MEN [sɪl'vɛstəʳ n tʃi:n mɛn] - men who used a sylvester, a powerful device working on a ratchet principle which could be used for DRAWING OFF props in difficult or dangerous situations, for instance, when a prop was partly buried.

The handle pulled a SWORD which retained the chain, a butterfly was turned and the BOX drawn back and dropped every time the handle was pulled. It was dangerous to let go of the handle until the machine had clicked (see RINGER AND CHAIN - an earlier method of DRAWING OFF).

THUMPING MACHINE - a modern machine which makes the STABLE HOLE for the trepanner or shearer.

TINKERS - a DIRTY seam of coal in the middle of the face. It is only found in the BLACK SHALE seam.

TIPPLER - mechanism which turns tubs over to empty them into a container (chute). The conveyor belt passes underneath taking the coal to the screens, before it is taken to the washer. (N) Equivalent words used in other areas are UNLOADER, DUMPER according to Nelson.

TOP - ON THE TOP - colliers' expression for outside the pit.

TRAM - coal-carrying wagon on rails, pulled originally by ponies. Trams are almost obsolete now, as there are usually drifts down to the coal face, and conveyors to the face from the pit top. TUB and WAGON are synonymous. (see JOT). The term is used in South Wales for TUB according to Nelson. HUTCH is the Scottish equivalent.

TREPANNER - power-loading machine which cuts coal and then loads it on to the PANZER CHAIN, a heavy duty conveyor. It is similar to a SHEARER. (N)

TUB - see TRAM. (N)

TURN [tɔn] - to TURN coal: i.e. to bring it up the shaft. This is done during the day shift.

TURNOUT ['tɔnɛ:t] - depot in which trams or supplies are stored. Elsewhere in the country it refers to the branching off of one rail track from another. (Nelson)

TRAMMING - in the old days of mining, while ripping was being done, rubble would be conveyed by TRAM (trammed) and emptied into a GOB. A TRAMMER would do this job, often pushing the trams by hand. (N)

TUGHOLE - see CLIP.

TWO-LEG-MAN - man who sets up two-legged supports. As the coal-cutting machine goes forward he follows it. The THREE-LEG-MAN finishes the process of supporting the roof. Two-leg and three-leg supports are erected alternately.

UPCAST SHAFT - air shaft along which foul air was pumped out of the mine. It was also known as the RETURN shaft (see DOWNCAST SHAFT). (N)

WAGON - see TRAM. In other mining areas it refers to a railway truck. (Nelson)

WASHER - coal is conveyed by belt here to be washed after screening. During washing, coal, being denser than dirt, sinks to the bottom. (N)

WATCH PROP [watʃ prɔp] - a safety prop.

WEIGHMAN - man who weighed the contents of a tub, before modern all-conveyor mining rendered the position obsolescent. (N)

WHEEL HOLES [weɪl ɔulz] - recesses in which haulage ropes run round.

WINDING HOUSE - engine room where the machines worked which pulled the cages or chairs. Winding is a widely used term in mining for hoisting men or materials in a shaft.

ZIPPER - a trade term for a machine which mends broken conveyor belts, pulling the two broken ends together and fastening them like a zip. An older method was to use BUCKLES, when stud holes would be made and a rivet driven in.